



New Bedford Harbor

New Bedford, Massachusetts

Site Description

The 18,000-acre New Bedford Harbor site is an urban tidal estuary with sediments that are highly contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals. From the 1940s until EPA's PCB ban in the 1970s, facilities associated with the production of electrical devices discharged industrial wastes containing PCBs directly and indirectly into the harbor. As a result, PCB's contaminate the harbor in varying degrees for at least six miles, from the upper Acushnet River into Buzzards Bay. A five-acre northern portion of the Acushnet River Estuary contaminated with high levels of PCBs (the "hot spot" area) was dredged in 1994 and 1995. Bioaccumulation of PCBs within the marine food chain has resulted in closing the entire site area to lobstering and fishing, and recreational activities and harbor development have been limited.

Cleanup Actions to Date

Since the site was placed on the Superfund's National Priorities List in 1983, EPA has been addressing the site in four stages: initial actions, and three long-term cleanup actions focusing on the hot spot area, the upper and lower harbor areas, and the Buzzards Bay area. Approximately 146,000 cubic yards of the most highly contaminated sediments and shoreline soils, backyards and salt marshes have been addressed. Full-scale dredging, dewatering and disposal operations began in 2004. Dredging operations typically are conducted 40 days per year. In 2005, EPA partnered with the City and State on a pilot underwater cap in conjunction with a navigational dredging project, saving an estimated \$15 million.

Planned Use of Recovery Act Funding

Recovery Act funding for this site will be added to the existing funding of ongoing dredging efforts, which will accelerate cleanup activities. While the entire cleanup effort will extend beyond the use of this additional funding, the funds will speed up these efforts by allowing the dredging of a larger volume of contaminated sediment from the highly contaminated upper harbor. The accelerated cleanup will help facilitate the City's plans to develop shoreline public access, recreational boating, competitive rowing, and wetland restoration in the upper and lower harbor areas.

February 2010 Update

The \$30 million funded by the Recovery Act has supported the ongoing full-scale dredging at the site, which began in 2004. With that funding, EPA has been able to increase the amount of funding available for annual dredging in 2009 and 2010. As a result, EPA increased the annual average of 40 dredging days to 120 such days in 2009. EPA started the dredging in June 2009 and completed it in early December 2009. In 2010, EPA expects to resume dredging work May 19, 2010 through the beginning of November 2010. Overall, the Recovery Act funding adds a total of seven extra months of dredging over the two-year period and should result in approximately 70,000 cubic yards of additional sediment removal. To date, approximately 200,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments and soils have been remediated (this estimate includes work done prior to the start of annual full-scale dredging in 2004). Recovery Act funds created/retained 82.66 jobs for the 1st Quarter FY2010 reporting cycle. (Job numbers are recorded from Recovery.gov as of February 6, 2010.)